Safety in Kenya

Village Volunteers is committed to the safety and well-being of all volunteers. Be sure to read the following guide carefully for tips on how to protect yourself from some of the hazards of international travel. Should you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact our office at any time.

Tips for Protecting Yourself Against Crime in the Cities

The cities of Kenya, like big cities anywhere in the world, are dangerous and vigilance is strongly advised. The villages are generally very safe and hospitable for volunteers; however, travel to larger cities should be treated with more caution.

In the cities, belongings such as passport, plane tickets, credit cards, and money should be kept in a secure place on your person (money belt, neck pouch under your clothes, etc.) and completely out of sight. This is very important, as you may be very surprised at the boldness and clever tactics of some thieves. It is advisable to not be out at night, particularly in Kisumu, Kitale and Nairobi. **Under no circumstances should you ever be in Nairobi alone without an escort.**

Below are some additional tips while in cities:

- Use common sense about safety, as you would at home.
- Avoid public demonstrations and civil disturbances.
- Do not travel on your own at night, and stay in well-lit areas.
- Leave valuables at home, and attempt to avoid looking like a rich tourist.
- Do not draw attention to yourself either through your actions or dress.
- Beware of pickpockets. Women with babies, children, or other unsuspecting parties may be potential pickpockets. You do not have to necessarily be rude, but be sure to keep your space. Pickpockets will often jostle you, create some sort of distraction or disturbance, or casually ask for the time or for directions.

Transportation Safety

In Kenya, accidents are the most common cause of injury, so take safety seriously by always wearing your seat belt, and do not ride in the front seat of a *matatu* (mini van) or taxi. Also, avoid night driving in rural areas due to poor road conditions and the threat of banditry. While in taxis, keep your doors locked and windows up in traffic or at lengthy stoplights.

Criminal Penalties

The penalty in Kenya for possession of illegal drugs, including marijuana, is ten years in prison with no option of release with a fine. Village Volunteers will not be responsible for reckless disregard for country laws.

What to Do If Problems Arise

Lost or Stolen Passports

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, report the loss immediately to local police authorities and the nearest embassy or consulate. It is imperative to keep a photocopy of your passport in your luggage, as you will need to provide information and documentation of your identity. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will expedite the renewal process.

Money, ATM's and Credit Cards

Keep in mind that it is always best to avoid carrying large sums of cash. Instead, we suggest that you bring one Visa credit/debit card and approximately $100 USD (or the equivalent in your local currency) to exchange upon arrival in Kenya.

Credit cards are not useful in villages. If you do bring a credit card, be sure to keep your card number and its "Lost or Stolen" 800 number separate and "at home". In the unlikely event that your credit card is lost or stolen, this information will help your family or friends cancel and reissue your card. You should keep your credit card information with you in a place separate from your actual credit cards.

If your money and credit cards are lost or stolen, you will have plenty of support from your In-Country Coordinator. You will have compassionate help from those in your village, who will make sure you are okay until the necessary plans can be arranged.

ATM access is available only in the cities. Be aware that they are particular targets of watchful thieves. In the case that you run out of money, it is important to have a contact person at home who understands your banking and can deposit money into your account.

Internet & Phone Cards

Phone communication may be difficult, and often times expensive. Therefore, you should let people at home know about the potential difficulties for calling, and that you may be out of touch for extended periods of time. Always try to avoid collect calls that can cost up to ten dollars a minute or more.

There are internet cafes in most of the larger towns, and are less likely in the rural regions. Although it is becoming more common in smaller towns, the service is extremely slow. Plan to be out of touch for the most part, keeping in mind that you will have the opportunity to visit the larger towns periodically.

If you are concerned about staying connected during your time in Kenya, you may want to consider renting or purchasing a cell phone. The In-Country Coordinator can help make arrangements if you are interested.

Contacts & Resources

The environment of all village placements is very hospitable and supportive. If you are sick, injured, or need help, the Directors and Volunteer Coordinators are prepared to assist you. Your In-Country Coordinator is also always on hand to answer any questions and provide assistance. Please see the **Kenya Contact Information** sheet for a current contact list.